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SUBJECT: KYRGYZ AND PAKISTANI AMBASSADORS ON RECENT SCO  
SUMMIT IN TASHKENT

Classified By: Poloffs R. Fitzmaurice and T. Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B  
, D)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conducted its sixth annual meeting of Prime Ministers in Tashkent on November 2. The Ambassador visited his Pakistani and Kyrgyz counterparts this week to get a readout of the proceedings. Pakistan, which has observer status, is an aspiring member and described potential economic and security benefits of SCO membership, including raising its international profile in the fight against terrorism. The Pakistani Ambassador also highlighted his country's deepening trade ties with Uzbekistan and lamented Pakistan's deteriorating domestic political situation. The Pakistani Ambassador described difficulty in effectively operating the Embassy in Tashkent and communicating with Islamabad. The Kyrgyz Ambassador described a robust schedule of SCO activities, including major transportation projects that would link China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. He noted the atmosphere within the SCO is positive and productive and there are no current plans to expand membership. The Kyrgyz Ambassador also noted President Karimov's absence at the SCO summit and said the GOU offered no explanation about his schedule, which indicates possible internal indecision within the Apparatus. The SCO seems to be gaining in stature in the region and conducting more substantive meetings on security and economic development, and rivalries between Russia and China are downplayed since they both feel they can exert influence on their own agenda items. End summary.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (C) On November 2, Tashkent hosted the sixth meeting of Prime Ministers of the SCO member states. Currently, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are members of the SCO, while Mongolia, Iran, Pakistan, and India have observer status. Afghanistan was also invited to the summit as a "guest," but lacks official observer status. Turkmenistan is not a member nor does it have observer status (apparently by its own choice); Turkmen representatives were also invited as guests, but reportedly chose not to attend.

#### PAKISTAN STILL ONLY AN SCO OBSERVER...

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¶3. (C) The Ambassador met on November 7 with Pakistani Ambassador H.E. Sajjad Kamran for a readout of the SCO summit, which was attended by Kamran and Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri. Given Pakistan's lack of SCO membership status (Pakistan has been a SCO observer since 2005), Kamran and Kasuri were unable to attend the initial closed-door sessions and they did not know what was discussed there. They attended a later plenary session where each of the member states and observers (and Afghanistan) read from prepared statements of approximately four minutes-length. The open-door session was then followed by a press conference and the signing of official documents.

#### ...BUT SEEKS EVENTUAL SCO MEMBERSHIP

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¶4. (C) Ambassador Kamran provided the Ambassador with a copy of Kasuri's statement from the SCO meeting, reiterating Pakistan's desire to become a full SCO member. According to the statement, the SCO plays an important role in forging cooperation between member states in the struggle against international terrorism and extremism. It further praises the strides that the SCO has taken in forging closer economic ties between members, in particular noting the creation of SCO's Business Council and Inter-Bank Consortium. The statement also recognizes the important role the SCO could play in harmonizing relations between energy producers, consumers, and transit states.

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¶5. (C) According to Kamran, Pakistan seeks eventual membership in the SCO for two major reasons: (a) Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism, and therefore seeks to share its experience and knowledge with other member states; and (b) to counter the misperception that Pakistan is an exporter of extremism and instability. As Kamran views it, the main goals of the SCO are to fight extremism and to promote economic ties between member states.

¶6. (C) Kamran said that Pakistan's bid for SCO membership was stalled by other member states that prefer to deepen relations between existing members rather than expand SCO membership. Kamran noted that the Uzbeks opposed Pakistan even acquiring observer status prior to the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Since that time, though, the Uzbeks have come around to supporting Pakistan's bid for membership.

He also believed that the Uzbeks support Afghanistan's membership in the SCO, but noted that the SCO is unlikely to admit the country until it stabilizes internally. (Kyrgyz Ambassador Azizbek Madmarov separately said there are no current plans to invite new members. He added that the current members are satisfied by the observers' roles, especially in promoting cultural ties and providing advice on issues of mutual concern).

#### PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH UZBEKISTAN, CHINA

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¶7. (C) On the sidelines of the SCO summit, Foreign Minister Kasuri met with Uzbek Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev and Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov, as well as Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Prime Minister Wen Jiebo. Kamran noted that the discussion with the Uzbeks lacked substance, but more serious trade and security issues were discussed with the Chinese. According to Kamran, China supports Pakistan's bid for SCO membership, hoping it will play an important role in developing economic ties between SCO members.

¶8. (C) Kamran noted Pakistan's deepening relations with Uzbekistan, stating that trade between the countries has

grown by a magnitude of four over the last four years. In Kamran's point of view, Uzbekistan enjoys good relations with many Asian countries, though he also recognized that Uzbekistan will also need to improve relations with the West to fully escape its isolation.

#### AMBASSADOR KAMRAN REFLECTS ON UNREST IN PAKISTAN

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¶9. (C) Kamran expressed his regret at the recent unrest gripping Pakistan. Unofficially, he shared his opinion that his government cannot defeat religious militants in Pakistan militarily, but must open a dialogue with their more moderate leaders in order to isolate the extremists. While he believed that using force would be preferable, he did not see this as a realistic option.

#### INFORMATION WOES PLAGUE PAKISTANI EMBASSY

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¶10. (C) Kamran also shared with the Ambassador the information woes of his Embassy. Kamran reported that the Embassy's only source of information came from its subscription to BBC Monitoring and news summaries occasionally shared by the U.S. Embassy. He noted that it took up to four days to receive faxes from Islamabad, which he seemed to indicate was what his Embassy relied upon for confidential communication. Kamran does not speak Russian,

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and had difficulty following some of the scripted messages presented at the SCO conference due to the poor quality of the simultaneous translation.

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#### KYRGYZ AMBASSADOR DESCRIBES ACTIVE SCO AGENDA

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¶11. (C) The Ambassador met on November 8 with his Kyrgyz counterpart, Azizbek Madmarov, who noted that the atmosphere at last week's Tashkent summit was very positive and there were useful discussions "in many different directions." Madmarov added that there is not a pervasive "big brother" attitude on the part of large, powerful SCO members towards smaller countries (like Kyrgyzstan) but rather a productive spirit of mutual cooperation. He noted that each SCO member state appoints a national coordinator whose job is to pave the way for key events such as this gathering or the annual meeting for the heads of state (which took place in Bishkek this year). In addition to the Prime Minister-level Tashkent summit, many other minister-level SCO meetings have been held recently or are planned. The General Prosecutors of the six member states just completed a meeting on November 7, also in Tashkent. The Ministers of Agriculture will meet in the near future, and Energy Ministers will meet per Russia's proposed "energy club" (although Madmarov noted that Kazakhstan is seeking "a more Asian strategy" on energy issues). Madmarov described the "energy club" as more of a concept than an actual reality at this stage.

#### AMBITIOUS TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

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¶12. (C) According to Madmarov, there were substantial discussions at the SCO meetings about "special programs of economic cooperation" between member states. He described ambitious plans for expanded automobile and railroad links between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. Regarding financing for such infrastructure upgrades, Madmarov noted that each country would be responsible for its own sections, but he quickly added that "members will also explore ways of helping each other", which implies that the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks expect China to fund the lion's share of costs. Press reports of the SCO event only noted planned road upgrades and made no mention of rail connections, which would be

particularly challenging given the mountainous terrain between the countries. (Comment: We have received no indication that China intends to fund either road or rail anytime soon. End comment.)

#### TAJIKS PROPOSE NOVEMBER MEETING ON AFGHANISTAN

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¶13. (C) Madmarov said the SCO countries are not particularly alarmed by the situation in Afghanistan and that members welcomed Afghan participation in the SCO summit as guests. However, at Tajikistan's request, the SCO will conduct a meeting in November in Dushanbe to consider Afghanistan-related issues. This initial meeting will be held on a lower level between foreign ministries, although eventually the SCO heads of government may meet to discuss Afghanistan-specific issues.

#### KARIMOV NOT PRESENT AT PLENARY EVENTS

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¶14. (C) On the subject of President Karimov's health rumors, Madmarov was able to confirm that Karimov did not attend any of the general meetings at the SCO gathering. He added that it was left very unclear as to whether Karimov was formally expected to participate, with the Uzbek hosts providing no information about the President's scheduled activities. But participants had expected Karimov to show up, and there was some confusion when he did not materialize at the SCO meeting. Madmarov emphasized that Karimov did separately conduct bi-lateral meetings with the Chinese and Russian Prime Ministers during the timeframe of the SCO summit. Madmarov drew parallels to an incident earlier this year when Karimov dropped off the radar screen for awhile with no

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explanation. In that case it turned out that Karimov's aunt had passed away and he was attending to family business, but it seems the Apparatus does not release any information about the President when something is out of the ordinary.

#### COMMENT

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¶15. (C) The readout from the two ambassadors, one with member status and one as an observer, indicates that SCO is growing in stature in the region. After a slow start there is an active schedule of substantive minister-level meetings on a variety of issues. Rivalries between Russia and China are downplayed because members can select the type and extent of cooperation they wish to engage in, and it seems that so far both powers can pursue their economic and security agendas within the SCO framework. It is interesting that members and aspiring members such as Pakistan increasingly see the economic development benefits of SCO as being as important as the security aspects. On the subject of Karimov's health, the Apparatus's silence when the President is unavailable may indicate internal indecision about how to proceed in his absence.

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